[Masterpost] Sequence Breaking.

- Dec. 4th, 2010 at 11:12 PM

Title: Sequence Breaking.
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: NC-17.
Warnings: Smut, blasphemy, violence, dubcon, angelcest.
Pairings/Characters: Lucifer/Gabriel primarily. Also contains: Gabriel/Castiel, Lucifer/Crowley, Gabriel/Crowley, and various others. Characters are Lucifer and Gabriel primarily - but there's Uriel and Crowley and Raphael and Michael and Alastair and angels and demons and humans and so on.
Word Count: 56,431 words. \o/
Summary: From the very beginning, when there were only the four archangels standing before God, to after the Apocalypse. Follows Lucifer and Gabriel through the years, and keeps an eye on those they affected.
Note: This is my NaNo novel. Go look at that wordcount again, mmkay?

Okay, first of all: giant thank yous to **ravenspear**, **jabber_moose**, **lilchibibunny** and everyone else who helped me through this thing. *giant hugs to flist*

Second: Credit where credit is due. I used this prompt and this prompt on November 1st to help me get my plot sorted out and going.

I also used Gustav Davidson's Dictionary of Angels for my primary resource on researching angels, Kaori Yuki's manga Angel Sanctuary as major inspiration (and Belial, Dobiel and a few others snuck in for cameos) and I rewatched this Supernatural music video about fifty times while writing this.

I welcome feedback, provided that everyone understands that this was written quickly and for fun over a month.

And now, without further ado:

Sequence Breaking

Part One [1/2] | Part One [2/2] | Part Two | Part Three | Part Four | Part Five | Part Six & Epilogue

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His God is an old one, and if there is anything Lucifer has learned about old gods, it is this: they are wrathful. Dangerous. Prone to destroying anything they care to notice with barely a gesture of power.

Lucifer remembers the day he met his Father, and beheld His glory with his own eyes. He remembers Michael's naked fear as they waited, and he remembers the burnt smell and bright flashes behind him that signaled the deaths of his brothers, other angels who weren't strong enough to survive the terrible glory that was their Father.

His Father was glorious in form, and his eyes were bright stars that Lucifer knew he would get lost in, if he were allowed to stay. When his Father looked at him, with a gaze that was everything and glorious and nearly too beautiful to behold, Lucifer knew then that he would do anything to be seen by his God. He lowered himself, bowing before his Lord, and whispered praises were on his lips.

A hand gripped his chin and raised his face again, and this time, when Lucifer's eyes met God's, he saw darkness, a yawning endless darkness that was *old*, and he felt the touch of two fingers on his forehead.

He trembled as he knew his fate. He trembled as he knew the power that he had been given. He fell once more to the floor, once the hands on his face were gone, and he could not voice his pleas for this terrible burden to be lifted from him.

As his God and Father left his surviving angels, Lucifer prayed for the darkness to be lifted from him, but he received no answer. Only silence and the hand of his brother on him. He slowly stood again and looked, and there was Michael, there was Gabriel, and there was Raphael. His three youngest brothers were but ashes upon the floor.

That was how Lucifer lost the first of his family.

This is how Lucifer learns to lie:

They are talking in whispers, holding a discussion about what happened, and what they received from their Father. Gabriel is bright and eager to be designated as a messenger, to be used in that fashion. Raphael is wondering why he would need to be a healer, as he can't understand why anyone would be injured. The only one who can harm angels is God, after all, or other angels, and he can't fathom why there would be harm.

Even Michael is bright and proud, but Lucifer can't listen to why. He's having trouble listening to them, seeing them being so happy. They're all putting off grief at their siblings who didn't survive, turning their attentions to the messages they all received.

Lucifer can't tell them that he is going to tear them apart, that he is going to be the cause for why Raphael will need to heal, for why Gabriel will be a messenger,

for why Michael will become a great warrior.

Michael reaches to touch Lucifer's cheek, concerned. He loves his family, his brothers, even those brothers of his who are yet to be created. Lucifer can see it in Michael's eyes that Michael is expecting Lucifer to tell them his good news, his new role. Lucifer's not ready to divide his family, not yet. Not when he still burns with a fierce love for them all. (He wonders, briefly, what will happen to him so that he will be able to fight them, to drive them to war. He shoves that thought aside for later after a moment.)

"Brother," Michael says, and Lucifer steels himself. He's never had to hide something from them before.

It's scary how easy it is to lie: "I too will be called to fight, Michael. Father wants me to fight." And then, quietly, looking away: "I...I'm not sure I'll be able to."

There's a pause, and he's afraid that Michael knows that he's not telling the whole truth. But then he is pulled into a hug, and Michael is telling him that he understands, that they will learn how to do what they must together.

He lets himself accept the comfort, and he figures out how to hide his discomfort well enough to be happy for his brothers. He tells Raphael that he hopes that he won't need Raphael's help, and Raphael smiles and tells him that he won't, he's sure of it. Lucifer turns to Gabriel and tells him that he'll try to make sure that Gabriel will have good news to carry.

When he looks at Michael again, he tries a smile, and Michael beams back at him. Lucifer has to stop and try to remember how he looks in that moment, innocent and happy and so, so unaware of what's yet to come.

Lucifer looks at Gabriel and Raphael in turn, struggling to etch this scene in his memory. He has a feeling that he will need the memory someday, to help him through some as-yet-unknown struggle.

There is already a rift opening between them, and Lucifer is the only one to see it.

Later, days later, they are still in a form of limbo as there is no change in Heaven. There are only the four of them there, in long open corridors and rooms and towers and fields and countless hiding places that Lucifer has found, for he needs time away from the others, and he has discovered the comfort that solitude brings.

There is a white room with a small pool in its center, and the floor has blue tiles. Cloth towels are hung on hooks at one end of the room, and the pool's water is always warm. Lucifer has discovered that there is a shelf built into the pool, perfect for sitting, and he wonders at why this pool was created in this way. (He wonders too if there is a proper name for it. He doesn't know of it, not yet.)

It is comfortable to rest in, but Lucifer cannot fathom a more practical use for the pool. (He wonders, vaguely, if he is missing the point of this room. Perhaps he is.) Still, he takes to spending time in the pool, resting in the waters and thinking about everything he wants to.

He hasn't told anyone else where this room is. He doesn't plan to. It's a quiet place, except for the sound of the water.

There is one additional feature of the room that he enjoys: the ceiling is a mirror, and often he will rest his head on the edge of the pool and float, watching himself rest. He savors such a place, and he finds himself drawn to it more and more to spend time thinking.

When Gabriel finds his room, and slides into the pool next to him, Lucifer tells himself that he shouldn't be surprised that this has happened, but instead relieved that it took Gabriel this long to find it.

"Hello, Lucifer," Gabriel says, splashing the water lightly. He's bright and curious and for a moment Lucifer envies him once again. (He has spent time envying each of his brothers in turn, but now, with Gabriel in front of him, the envy has returned.) Gabriel's curiosity is an innocent one, and he doesn't yet understand the concept of boundaries.

Perhaps that is why Lucifer soon has a lapful of Gabriel, and water splashing into his face. He sits up with some effort, but Gabriel doesn't move from his lap.

"You've been ignoring us a lot, brother," Gabriel says, and leans in to look at Lucifer's eyes. "Has something happened?"

Lucifer looks back, aware for the first time of how warm Gabriel is, how soft his skin is - he is acutely aware of his Father's 'gift' for the first time. He feels the temptation of choice, the temptation of flesh, and that is what causes him to freeze in the waters. That is what causes Gabriel to shift and lean in, concerned.

"Lucifer?"

Lucifer can feel the warm thrum of a new sensation within him, and he breathes in, attempting to refrain from making the choice. Attempting, but not succeeding. He sees Gabriel's surprise when Lucifer pushes forward and captures Gabriel in a kiss, grips Gabriel's head and shoulders with his hands, and he feels more than hears Gabriel's shocked moan when Lucifer presses to him. Gabriel is warm and wet and Lucifer has never felt such a thing, has never wanted to feel *more* of such a thing.

He breaks the kiss to stare at Gabriel, and then he is pulling Gabriel back, licking his lips, his chin, his neck, tasting flesh and more as he drags his hands over Gabriel's back and hips and front.

Touching Gabriel's front makes him jerk forward with another startled moan, and

then Gabriel is struggling, pulling back, and Lucifer lets him go, lowering his head.

"I'm sorry," He says, turning away. "I'm sorry."

"W-what was that?" Gabriel asks, scrambling back. "I've never felt that - never - Lucifer, what was that?" Lucifer can hear panicked confusion in his voice, can hear Gabriel struggling not to shout, not to demand answers.

Lucifer remembers the yawning darkness in his Father's eyes, and his fate, and everything that he is allowed to do, *must* do to meet that fate, and he wonders if he has some of that same darkness in him now. He thinks of lying, of how good it felt to touch Gabriel. Of how good it must feel to be touched back. He lifts his head.

"It's something Father said not to do," Lucifer says, looking up and meeting Gabriel's eyes. "It will lead to questions and more choices and it will divide us all."

"Why?" Gabriel asks, wide-eyed and pressed back against the pool's side. "Why would you?" Lucifer has never heard sorrow in Gabriel's voice before.

He thinks of fate, and of how Michael will be furious with him. For Michael was the most innocent of them, the most eager to fight for his Father even as he didn't understand what it was to fight, and how Michael will hate him for introducing a rift between them all.

Lucifer stands, and before Gabriel can scramble out of the water Lucifer is holding onto him again, pushing him back down.

"I'll show you," he says. "I'll show you what it is to disobey."

Before Gabriel can protest, before he can form words, Lucifer has bent in and kissed him again, and placed his hands on Gabriel's front, and has begun to stroke. It doesn't take long before Gabriel is gasping in pleasure, in surprise, and he can do nothing more than cling to Lucifer.

Lucifer keeps licking and nipping at Gabriel's lips and face and neck, finding out what makes Gabriel moan, and what makes him jolt in pleasured surprise, and he keeps his hands moving, realizing that their cocks are the best places to touch to feel good.

He's learning, remembering what pushes Gabriel to the edge and what doesn't, and he wonders if these things will work on him later. He'll have to experiment. (He wonders at why this was supposed to be avoided, he wonders at how it feels so good, he wonders at his Father for making it this way on purpose.)

Gabriel comes with a cry and Lucifer's lips on his, and Lucifer discovers that Gabriel glows with a glorious light when he comes, without the focus to use their flesh to cover their true selves.

Lucifer lets go of Gabriel, getting out of the pool and toweling off, feeling his mouth pull into a smile.

"Perhaps it was a gift after all," He murmurs to himself, and looks at Gabriel.

Gabriel is shakily getting out as well, shakily toweling himself off, and he gives a startled moan at how the towel feels against his skin, which Lucifer supposes must be sensitive now that Gabriel is aware of what pleasure feels like.

He knows that he has that darkness in him now. He's enjoying the sight of Gabriel's guilty pleasure as he finishes toweling off and dresses.

Gabriel's almost gone when Lucifer calls out to him.

"Gabriel," Lucifer says, and Gabriel freezes. Lucifer knows that he is listening. "Tell Michael about this and I'll kill you."

As he says it, he knows that he can do it. He watches Gabriel flee then, and he looks at his hands. He hadn't meant to threaten, he hadn't meant to learn that much about himself.

His hands are shaking.

"I don't want to kill him," Lucifer tells his hands in a whisper. "I love him." He whispers again, knowing that he loves Gabriel, loves Raphael, loves Michael.

But he knows now that he can kill them. If, or when he is called to do so, he can deliver that blow. He can feel the darkness in him, the gift from his Father, along with the ability to make decisions that could lead to bad endings and along with the knowledge that would drive them all to madness.

"I love him," Lucifer tells himself again. "I don't want to hurt them." But as he says this, he knows that he is still smiling, and his hands are still shaking, and he wonders if he is still able to speak the truth at all, or if being able to lie means that he will be forever unable to be honest about anything.

He looks up, up into the mirror on the ceiling, and flinches away from the smirk on his face.

It is the work of a moment to smash the glass, to set a thousand cracks into the mirror. It takes more effort to destroy the mirror, to wipe it from existence, but the effort exhilarates him. He feels ready to expend more energy, to destroy more, and that is how he wipes the pool and the room it is in from existence.

He stands in the hallway, leans against the wall where there once was a door, and closes his eyes.

He is tired, but he feels more alive than he has in most of his life, and that, more than his smile and own growing darkness, scares him.

(Later, much later, when he has all of the time in the world to contemplate such things, Lucifer will think of this: He and his brothers have flesh, in Heaven, and forms that resemble their Father's. They have wings, when they choose to have them, and they have, once learned, a surprising mastery over their form. But Earth, Earth renders their flesh thin and barely enough to contain themselves safely enough for humanity, and Lucifer often likens it to a thin sheet being held over a bright fire. When he is feeling creative, that is.)

Gabriel doesn't tell Michael. He doesn't tell Raphael, either, and instead spreads his wings and flies up, as far above Heaven as he can go. He has manifested all of his wings, and so the heights he can reach are very high indeed.

He thinks that he should tell Michael about what had happened. He thinks of the burning shame he felt as Lucifer gave him a pleasure he had never felt before. He thinks of Lucifer's threat, and how true it rang in his ears.

Lucifer was meant to be a warrior, Gabriel thought. He had seen Lucifer lie about what their Father had meant for him, and he had wondered at why neither Michael nor Raphael had seen the lie.

But Lucifer hadn't been lying about becoming a warrior, which made Gabriel think of Michael and ache. Would they be called to fight against each other? Somehow, he thought it was likely. He knew that when Michael learned of this, he would break in some fashion.

Gabriel looks down at Heaven, wonders at how it will change, and decides that this is the first message that he will not carry. He hopes that it will be the last, and folds his wings as he goes into a dive.

He snaps his wings open before he crashes from his controlled fall and rises up again, flying up, and dives again.

It is mindless, and satisfying, and it helps him avoid thinking about Lucifer's eyes and hands.

The creation of more angels sounds like a great thunderclap as thousands, millions, countless angels are created in an instant. A hierarchy is formed a heartbeat later, and their duties are known to all heartbeats after that.

Not one of the new angels resembles their Father, or the original archangels. There are many-winged and many-eyed curved fires that are known as Thrones, there are Seraphim with four faces and six wings, there are fiery serpents and tall creatures and they are all angels.

There are other archangels, with forms that are closer to resembling their Father's, but none of them are as close as the original archangels are.

Lucifer goes flying, looking at every new angel, looking at every new form and task that they all have been set to, and he comes away from the flight knowing that not one of them could have looked at their Father's face and survived the experience.

He lands knowing that they are all closer to their Father than he thought originally, for they are all terrifyingly glorious, and he wonders at what God is planning.

He is left to wonder for a long moment, and then Raphael is landing next to him, folding his wings away as he faces Lucifer.

"Hello, Lucifer," Raphael says, placing his hands on the railing of the balcony. It is the first time that they have stood alone since Lucifer first lied to them all.

Lucifer looks at his brother, and wonders at the new weight he can see on Raphael's shoulders. He looks out at the dawn, the pale light of the new day shining over Heaven. He remains silent, and waits for Raphael to speak again, counting down heartbeats as he waits.

"Why did you lie to Michael?" Raphael asks, after a long moment. "And why have you changed Gabriel?"

Lucifer looks away from the dawn to meet Raphael's eyes. It is eight heartbeats before he responds. "Was Michael the only one who didn't realize that I didn't share everything?"

"Gabriel didn't want to realize it, Lucifer," Raphael says, and Lucifer can see a new coldness in his eyes. He wonders when Raphael abandoned his innocence, and he wonders when Michael will be forced to do the same. "I believe Michael won't let himself realize it."

"He doesn't need to, not yet." Lucifer says, and Raphael nods. They both understand that, if nothing else.

"Answer my questions, Lucifer," Raphael says after another moment. He looks out to the sky, and Lucifer has to fight a sudden urge to smile. Gabriel hasn't told Raphael anything, all this is here and now is Raphael being observant, and asking questions.

It occurs to Lucifer that the new angels shouldn't be allowed to question. Perhaps he'll make it a law, as he can. There's that feeling again, and he's smiling, unable to stop himself. (He needs to learn to control that, he thinks.)

"I lied to Michael to spare him, and you know it. He's not strong enough for this yet."

"He'll never be strong enough for this, Lucifer." Raphael isn't happy, he's disapproving, Lucifer can hear how much Raphael doesn't want to tell him this. "Go tell him now. Then he'll be ready when he needs to be."

"No," Lucifer says.

When he looks at Raphael again, his brother is glaring at him. "No?"

"No." Lucifer can't stop smiling. "I won't tell him."

He can see a building anger in Raphael, an anger he wasn't aware that Raphael could hold within him. He can see storm clouds in Raphael's eyes, and lightning in his wings. "Do you find this amusing, Lucifer?"

"Yes," Lucifer says. "And no. I won't tell him. I won't obey you. I'll do as I was ordered by God, and I will suffer for it. That's all. If any of you get in my way, I will fight. I wasn't lying about being ordered to become a warrior, if you saw that. And you...I will make you learn to heal, so that you cannot spend time fighting me."

He spreads his own wings, to match Raphael's, and he moves closer. "I'll even show you how I changed Gabriel."

Raphael is tense, and furious, and Lucifer kisses him, showing Raphael what he's learned, and he really isn't surprised when Raphael shoves him back. He laughs when Raphael growls, furious and shocked, and he leaps to the balcony's railing and off, flying away into the dawn.

He can't explain why he's so glad to see Raphael getting that furious, he can't explain the delight he has in causing that anger. He wonders at this, wonders if he'll ever be able to be ashamed of his actions like he should be, and then he reminds himself once again of the darkness he saw, that he has in him, and turns his mind to flying instead.

Gabriel finds Raphael on that same balcony, as he too is out and flying to see everything new in Heaven. He lands with a flurry of wings and it is a moment before he has all of them tucked away.

Raphael is staring at the sky, hand on the railing, and Gabriel thinks that Raphael's probably been frozen like that for some time. He looks like a statue, and so Gabriel has to move closer and touch Raphael's hand.

Raphael jerks back as if he's been burned, and Gabriel pulls back. "Oh," He says, getting it. "Sorry." Lucifer must have found him, must have done something. Gabriel wonders if it felt good for Raphael as it did for Gabriel, and he feels a surge of a new emotion that he finds a name for after a moment: jealousy.

He shakes it away as soon as he knows what it is. "What'd Lucifer do?" He asks, staying back. "He did something, right?"

"Yes," Raphael says after a moment, and Gabriel can now see the smoldering anger in his eyes. "Yes, our brother did something."

"You're angry at him."

"He's going to hurt us all."

Gabriel frowns, thinking of his own encounter. "Are you sure?"

"Yes," Raphael spreads his hands. "He will. Don't spend time with him, Gabriel."

Gabriel frowns. "I'm older than you," He says, straightening. "I know what he's doing, and I can handle myself."

Raphael stares back at him, and Gabriel glares back. Who is Raphael to order him around, he thinks? Who is - he cuts himself off, eyes widening.

"We're fighting over him," He says. "We're having an argument over Lucifer."

It takes a moment, and then it clicks for Raphael, and Gabriel can see when Raphael realizes what it means. There is a moment of horrified silence, and then Raphael is close, hugging Gabriel, once more the younger brother needing reassurance.

"He's driving us apart," Gabriel whispers, hugging back, and he feels Raphael's nod against his chest. Gabriel closes his own eyes, trying not to realize how warm Raphael is, and how easy it would be to continue touching, to show Raphael what Lucifer showed him.

He puts his hand on Raphael's back and looks up after a moment. "He's going to break Michael," He whispers, and there is the bright sun, shining fully after the dawn. There is a glorious morning, and for the first time Gabriel feels afraid of the future.

The first angel Lucifer meets and talks to is Barbelo, an archon who rules over a time that is yet to come. She, for genderless as they are, she has a feminine pronoun, speaks to him without invitation.

"My lord Lucifer," Barbelo asks, bowing her head. Lucifer sees her forming a question, he hears her begin to speak it and he places a finger on her lips.

"No questions, Barbelo," Lucifer says. "Not of me, not of my brothers."

"Understood, lord," she says, and he deigns to pet her hair for a brief moment. He watches her shiver at the touch.

"Will you be a messenger today, Barbelo?" He asks. "And give every angel in

Heaven this message for me?"

She nods, obedient as she must be, and he thinks again that this is too easy. It's too easy to tell her this. He cups her face in his hands and gives her his message.

"My brother Michael and I have agreed on this order: No angel is to question their superior, or to disobey them. Punishment for such actions will be harsh. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Lucifer," she whispers, and when he lets go of her she flies off, carrying Lucifer's message, trusting that it is true and right that she do so.

Lucifer smiles to himself, and wonders at the pleased feeling he has. It was so easy to use her, and he used Michael's name as well, and he can see this creating more conflict in the long run.

He's still smiling. He needs to figure out how to make that go away, and the sooner the better.

Gabriel discovers the orders first, discovers their originators, and so flies to Michael first, to confirm a sneaking suspicion that he has.

"Michael!" He says, and lands barely feet from Michael, who is handling a sword with a grace that Gabriel knows isn't perfect yet. He's learning to train with it, and learning how to cause flames to sprout from the blade and leap at his imaginary foes.

Michael lowers his sword, and turns to face Gabriel, both hands still on the hilt. "Gabriel," He says, and Gabriel almost recoils to see the unbroken innocence within him. He hasn't felt Lucifer's malignant touches yet, he hasn't been affected by Lucifer's changes. "What is it?"

Gabriel has to stop himself from pitying Michael, and shakes his head. He can't hide this from Michael forever.

"Did you give an order to the entire host?" he asks, after a moment. "With Lucifer?"

"No," Michael says, his face twisting in confusion. Gabriel aches to see it. "Why do you ask?"

"No angel can question their superior, or disobey them, as punishment will be harsh." Gabriel recites. "The order came from an agreement between Michael and Lucifer."

He doesn't even want to try to read the sudden mix of emotions he reads on Michael's face, but he understands the pain and anger that he sees. He felt such a thing all too clearly moments before, when he first heard of the news of the

decree, spreading like a disease across Heaven.

"Lucifer did this?" Michael asks, and for a moment all Gabriel can see in Michael is a blind, furious rage.

He nods, silent. He can't try to calm Michael, to explain what has happened, to make the situation understandable. He has delivered his message, and now it is up to Michael to act.

There is the rushing of wings, and Michael is gone, sword in hand, and Gabriel has to drop his head in a silent moment of agony.

But he must follow, must see how this plays out, and so he too takes to wing, following the bright beacon of fire that is Michael.

Lucifer is waiting for them, perched on the roof of a tall building. His wings are out, and Gabriel can see how relaxed Lucifer is. He looks almost defenseless, but he's not vulnerable.

He's smiling.

Michael hovers in the air a small distance away from Lucifer, holding his sword with both hands, angling it down towards the ground. The sun is angled just so, and his hair is a bright fiery halo around his face as he glares at Lucifer. The sun is angled just so, and Michael's body and wings casts Lucifer into shadow.

Lucifer raises a hand in greeting, straightening but not standing. "Hello, brother."

"What have you done?" Michael asks, and Gabriel feels Raphael join them. He looks at Raphael across the gap between Lucifer and Michael and he pictures a square, with each of them in one corner. He pictures a triangle, and it doesn't feel right.

Lucifer doesn't answer Michael, but he's watching him. Gabriel can see how bright his eyes are.

"Why have you done this?" Michael asks, and at that Lucifer stands. He spreads his hands and abruptly his wings are gone, and he is just a figure standing on the edge of a building.

"It will make Heaven stronger, Michael, and with what's coming, we will need a strong, unified Heaven."

"No," Michael says, and perhaps Gabriel has underestimated him after all. "You used my name in this. You have sown the seeds of discontent in Heaven, and you did so in my name."

"Yes." Lucifer doesn't deny it. Gabriel looks across to Raphael again and sees that

fury there again. They all understand what has happened. Lucifer's actions cannot be undone, not without weakening Heaven further, and they all know that for once Lucifer isn't lying about Heaven needing to be strong, unified."

"*Why*?" Michael asks, *demands* of Lucifer. "Why have you done this?"

Gabriel looks away. He closes his eyes. Michael doesn't understand, not yet. Michael won't understand until he is forced to see what has happened.

"It's all about choices, Michael," Lucifer says quietly, but the words are as clear as a bell. "It's about choices, and about choosing to do what isn't right. You will understand this, someday. All of you will understand this, someday soon."

"No," Michael whispers, and Gabriel opens his eyes and looks again. Michael has raised his sword. "I won't - can't let you do this to us."

Gabriel moves before he realizes that he is in motion. He casts Lucifer further into shadow as he stands between them, arms wide.

"Move, Gabriel," Michael says, and it is a long moment before Gabriel can speak, can protest what Michael wants to do, for the fury in Michael's eyes and arms and in his sword is great.

"No!" He manages. "We can't - Michael, Lucifer's our *brother*, he's family, we can't - "

There is a hand on his shoulder, and then Lucifer is speaking.

"Not yet, Michael. We can't do this yet. I haven't earned death from anyone's hands, not yet."

Gabriel has questions, he sees that Michael has questions, and he knows that Raphael has questions. But none are asked, and Lucifer says nothing more in the long silence.

Michael sheathes his sword and leaves, with Raphael trailing after him. Gabriel begins to follow, but Lucifer's hand on his shoulder stops him. Lucifer tugs, and Gabriel turns and is caught in a gentle kiss.

"You didn't tell him anything," Lucifer says quietly, for his ears only. "Thank you, Gabriel."

Gabriel stares at him, unable to say anything, wishing with all his might that there wouldn't be conflict, and he continues to say nothing as Lucifer lets go of him and leaves.

Raphael sits and watches Michael, watches him return to practicing with his sword. It's a good outlet for Michael's anger, he supposes, and he wonders if he is

allowed to try the same challenge.

He stands, wonders if being a healer means he can't fight, and calls out to Michael.

Michael stops, sword halting in the air, and approaches him. "Yes?"

"Would I be allowed to fight?" Raphael asks. He sees Michael look at his own sword, and then at Raphael's hands, and for a long moment he is silent, considering the question.

"Yes," Michael says at last. "Provided you take care not to take unnecessary risks."

Raphael nods, silent, and creates a sword with a gesture of power, and it isn't long before he is standing at Michael's side, learning how to thrust and parry and defend himself.

He can see already that he will never match Michael in strength or ability, but for what he is, he can do enough.

Perhaps it will be enough to defend Michael at some crucial moment in the future, he thinks. Perhaps it will be enough to let him destroy Lucifer, he thinks for a brief moment.

He sees Michael lunge forward, destroying yet another target, and he sees the fires coming into existence on Michael's blade, and he has to stop and watch as Michael works to perfect his movements.

The realization, when it comes, scares him: Michael is practicing with targets that have heights and shapes close to Lucifer's own height and shape. Michael is training to kill his brother.

Raphael grips his sword tighter and resumes his own training, thinking that Michael will be the one to slay Lucifer, and no other. His own blade will be used to clear the path to Lucifer's heart, but his will not be the final blow.

He is scared for a moment, and then for no longer: he can trust that Michael will finish this.

Gabriel watches the angels go about their duties, and he throws himself into the task of discovering the extent of his duties and his station. There's something missing in the equation, however, and it doesn't take long before he realizes that there is something empty to their duties.

They are meant to rule, to protect and to fight, and there is nothing to protect, and nothing to fight.

Gabriel is walking with Uriel when he realizes this. Uriel, an archangel that reminds Gabriel of Raphael so strongly at times. Uriel could have been there, he could have stood with them before God, but he didn't and so Gabriel is stronger than he.

"The cherubs of the lower ranks have nothing to do, Gabriel," Uriel is saying. "We're all waiting for - "

Gabriel raises a hand and Uriel goes quiet. Gabriel has made it clear to Uriel that he can question Gabriel in private, can ignore what he has to say in private, but Uriel still obeys the slightest order without a second thought.

He remains silent as Gabriel thinks for long moments, tries fitting pieces of the puzzle before him into place. Uriel watches as Gabriel lowers his hand, closes his eyes, and then abruptly claps his hands and looks at Uriel.

"I have an idea of what we're waiting for! Don't worry, when Father next acts we'll all have duties to do, Uriel." Gabriel claps a hand on Uriel's back and heads off, hiding his own worry underneath a smile.

He's been dreading this moment, this clarion call for the angels to listen and to wait.

Their God and Father is in Heaven, and once again the four brothers are standing in that same room and waiting with fear and trembling for the news. Even Lucifer bows his head before his Father, much as he wants to look up, to attempt again to remember precisely what God looks like.

He remembers God's eyes, the twin fires with ancient chasms of darkness in them. He remembers the feel of God's fingers on his forehead. He remembers the feeling of ignorance being torn away and knowledge settling into its place.

Most of all, he remembers the ageless and endless power that lay behind every movement and gesture and action made by his Father.

That is why he bows his head, in respect for everything God is, was and ever shall be.

(Lucifer understands his role, now. It took him time to come to terms with it, to discover what he would do and what he could do. He needed to see Michael's anger, to see Gabriel struggle to stop him by playing peacemaker. He needed to learn how to lie, and he needed to learn where he would never succeed with lies. Most of all he needed the time to accept his fate, and he is ready, now, to destroy as much of his family and home as he can.)

This is why he reels back in horrified surprise when they are made to understand what humans are, and what they must do for humanity.

(Gabriel had been smiling to himself, anticipating the creation of some new creatures, some new responsibility. But he hadn't expected *this.*)

"No," Lucifer utters, the word heavy in the silence. He looks surprised at himself for saying it, then lifts his chin, meeting God's eyes once again, and he isn't surprised at all to see the darkness there, barely concealed. (Was it ever concealed?)

"No," Lucifer repeats. "I will bow to you and no others. I will not lower myself to become a servant for these creatures."

He ignores the stares of the others, the fear curling low in his belly, and he lifts his chin, daring God to strike him down where he stands. He knows that he won't be destroyed, not here, not for this, not by God. He was granted his role for a reason, he hasn't played it out fully. (He has slain no angels, not yet, he thinks.)

The room is filled with light, and heat, and Lucifer is not destroyed. He is ablaze with a new light, and Lucifer knows what he must do, if he will not bow to God's new creations.

"So be it," Lucifer says, and he turns away from God then. He casts a long shadow when he turns from God, and he accepts its presence with a quickly hidden look of pain. "I will not be cast out so quietly, Lord. There will be war."

(Unspoken: You planned this, Father, you created me with a pride so great that I would have no choice but to refuse to scrape my head to the ground for lowly creatures formed from dust. You planned for this, and so gave Heaven an army, an army that I can divide and lead those who would follow me against the rest.

Unspoken: Are you nothing more than a malicious creator who cares little for his creations? His children? Does that great power within you demand a blood sacrifice? Does it please you to torment us?

Unspoken: I don't understand why it had to be me. You are capable of creating a being who would do this without regrets.

Unspoken: I do this out of love for you, Father, however much I may suffer for it.)